

Today our country is at war and once again many brave people have gone off to fight in defense of freedom. They are truly the wings of the butterfly. Just as I picked up Bailey and placed her safely on my lap the troops fighting now, and the troops that have fought for us in the past picked up America, and started to fly. In order to start us swinging I had to push hard off the rocky ground. The American soldiers don't have an easy task ahead of them. We are just now, just kicking off of the rocky ground. But I have no doubt that we will fly. A butterfly has two wings. Each equally important. The soldiers will no doubt put 110% into flying our country to the freedom of the open skies. But we the American people must put equally as much effort into flying the country higher. All of us as a team must reach out to America's future. Without knowing us people have laid down their lives so that we would be able to enjoy the freedoms that are now being threatened. America too has a dream stone. Only it comes in a different form. It is tri-colored in red, white, and blue. Red for the blood shed yesterday, White for the pure freedoms we enjoy today and Blue for the endless clear skies of tomorrow.

Our flag is our dream stone holding inside of it the very hopes and dreams of our Nation. We held tightly to it as it was proudly carried through World War One, World War Two, Desert Storm, Vietnam and Korea. While we were enjoying a time of great prosperity we tucked our stone away in our pocket. On September 11th we pulled it out of our pockets when firefighters proudly raised it high at ground zero, athletes displayed it on their jerseys, and average Americans flew it from their cars and homes. My generation knows how to dream. Will the generation after us be able to say the same? We must reach out and place the knowledge of the past into the hands of the future. When we empower the future generations with knowledge our country is sure to thrive. It is estimated that over one million men and women have died in service to our great country. Let us, America's present, take pride in our history and reach out to the future by passing along our knowledge and our great American dream stone. Because without a doubt America's future is whatever America dreams it to be.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BOB RILEY

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2002

Mr. RILEY. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained for Rollcall No. 295, on H.R. 4687, the National Construction Safety Team Act. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

THE UNINSURED

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 15, 2002

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, last week, on July 11, 2002, several of my colleagues, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. LEE, Mr. McDERMOTT, and Ms. CARSON, declared that it was time for this Congress to place universal health care at the top of the nation's political agenda. This declaration, I believe, was a defining moment for the universal health care movement in Amer-

ica. Not since 1994 have we seen such a visible and strong nationwide movement for universal health care.

Two years ago, in an attempt to create momentum and a unified strategy to achieve universal health care in Congress, I founded, along with Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, and the Asian Pacific American Caucus, the "Congressional Universal Health Care Task Force," which now has 44 Members. For over two years we have sponsored briefings on Capital Hill, attended town meetings on universal health care in cities across the country, and learned from health care experts about different ways to achieve universal health care.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced House Concurrent Resolution 99 with several of my colleagues from the "Congressional Universal Health Care Task Force," in order to build the momentum for passage of universal health care legislation by 2004.

We currently have 86 co-sponsors for this bill. There are over 325 national, state, and local organizations who support it as well. House Concurrent Resolution 99 does not specify how to pay for universal health care, nor does it spell out how a health care for all system would be administered. Instead, the resolution explicitly states what universal health care should be—affordable, comprehensive, and accessible for all Americans.

America is on the road to universal health care. How can we as members of Congress justify the fact that we have one of the best health insurance plans available, yet we allow 40 million Americans to have no health insurance coverage at all? Mr. Speaker, we cannot defend something that is clearly indefensible.

In the world's wealthiest country, my colleagues somehow can sleep at night knowing that right now in America, there are millions of patients, many of the children and families, that are having serious heart problems, lung problems, headaches, dental problems, mental illness, or other maladies, but are delaying treatment, not because they do not care about their health, but because the system does not care about them.

We now know empirically, based on the recent Institute of Medicine's 2002 report on the uninsured, that 18,000 Americans die each year because they were uninsured. If we truly care about the health and well being of working families, and those with serious illnesses who are too sick to work, we would ensure that all Americans would have peace of mind, as they do in Europe and Canada, to accessible, affordable, high quality, and comprehensive health care for all guaranteed by law.

In Michigan, thousands of uninsured HIV/AIDS patients can not afford the necessary cocktail of life sustaining drugs due to budget cut backs of government subsidized HIV/AIDS prescription drug programs. Can we continue to allow the uninsured chronically ill, those who have serious physical or mental health problems to go without needed health care for long periods of time, jeopardizing their lives, and needlessly suffering due to having untreated illnesses? For Congress to ignore these health care injustices and continue to "wish our health crisis away" is both immoral and cold hearted.

Plain and simple, if you do not have health insurance, you will receive "second class medicine," as Consumer Reports magazine

highlighted in an in depth story published last year. This is particularly true if you are African American or Hispanic. Might I remind you that the first question a nurse or hospital intake administrator asks the patient is not, "May I help you," but rather, "Do you have health insurance?" Health care in America for the most part is a business, and therefore, health care providers and physicians that are making money do not have an incentive to provide charity care.

The Kaiser Family Foundation recently reported that the majority of the uninsured do not receive comprehensive charity care in hospital emergency rooms or community clinics. Because there is no such thing as "universal charity care" in this country, we need universal health care and we need it now. Most uninsured patients with serious illnesses need long term health care treatment, prescription drugs, or medical equipment. Currently, millions of uninsured chronically ill patients must suffer the indignities of spending days and weeks searching for charity care. They often borrow money from relatives or friends just to purchase prescription drugs or to see a doctor. This is wrong and we all know it.

For the past two years, the "Congressional Universal Health Care Task Force" has sponsored several briefings with my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus, Progressive Caucus, Hispanic Caucuses, and the Asian Pacific American Caucus on the uninsured crisis in America. We have heard story after story of untold suffering by uninsured or under-insured Americans. We have also heard from numerous physicians who saw patients after their illness were full blown, many of them who died, because they delayed treatment only because they were uninsured. I urge Members of Congress to read "As Sick As it Gets," by Rudolph Mueller, M.D., a ground breaking book about the shocking reality of America's healthcare system. The book documents case after case of Dr. Mueller's patients who tragically became chronically ill, or died, as a result of delaying health care only because they were uninsured.

The Task Force has heard from numerous Americans whose credit was ruined for life, and went into bankruptcy due to thousands of dollars of unpaid medical bills. There are approximately 200,000 bankruptcies in America each year due to unpaid medical bills. Individuals and families should not have to experience the pain and humiliation of declaring bankruptcy just because they got sick. I heard testimony last year from two Washington D.C. residents, a husband and wife with cancer, both high school teachers, who declared bankruptcy due to the high costs of chemotherapy. They were both insured at the time, but had to rely on their credit cards to cover the costs of treatment, due to inadequate private health insurance coverage. Their daughter, who has Hepatitis C, called dozens of doctors but was denied access because she was uninsured. She is having a difficult time returning to work, because she needs long term therapy and treatment in order to be productive again. This is a national disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe, unlike many of my colleagues, that universal health care means the federal government provides vouchers so Americans can purchase costly and inferior or private health insurance, that in most cases, will not adequately cover one's health care needs, especially if an individual